

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 5829

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION AS SEEN BY THE MODERATE OPPOSITION

1. SUMMARY: DESPITE VIRTUAL COLLAPSE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, SOME LEBANESE PARLIAMENTARIANS STILL BELIEVE SITUATION CAN BE SALVAGED THROUGH TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PROCESS. EMBOFF SOUGHT OUT VIEWS OF MODERATE AND INDEPENDENT MARONITE DEPUTY MIKAEL DAHER ON VIABLE PROGRAM AND PERSONALITIES TO EFFECT RAPPROCHEMENT AMONG CHRISTIANS, LEBANESE MOSLEMS AND PALESTINIANS. END SUMMARY.

2. TOCHRRALAL OFF MET JULY 1 WITH MKAEL DAHER, MARONITE DEPUTY FROM AKKAR WHO STILL LIVING -- AS HE HAS FOR MANY YEARS -- IN FATAH-CONTROLLED WEST BEIRUT. DAHER IS INDEPENDENT DEPUTY BUT CLOSE IN HIS THINKING IN MANY RESPECTS TO ERSTWHILE (?) PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RAYMOND EDDE. (DAHER ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY VOTE FOR PRESIDENT IN MAY.) HE IS ALSO CLOSE TO MOSLEM LEADER SAEB SALAM.

3. HE SAYS ROOTS OF PRESENT CONFLICT ARE IN NARROW-MINDED VIEWS, INEPTITUDE AND CORRUPTION OF MAJOR CHRISTIAN LEADERS -- FRANJIEH, CAHMOUN, GEMAYEL. FRANJIEH, HE SAYS HAD ATTEMPTED EXCESSIVELY STRONG-HAPDED METHODS IN THE PAST, APPOINTING SUCCESSION OF WEAK SUNNIS PRIME MINISTERS, AND OVERREACTING N 1974 TO PALESTINIAN PROVOCATIONS BY DIRECTING LEBANESE AF ATTACK ON PALESTINIAN CAMPS AT SABRA AND ELSEWHERE.

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4. FRANJIEH MUST BE COMPELLED TO RESIGN -- HOPEFULLY BY SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD. BUT SARKIS IS NOT ANSWER: HE LACKS PERSONAL POLITICAL FOLLOWING AND HAS MIND AND PERSONALITY OF A BUREACRAT, OR, AT BEST, OF A GAUTE FUNCTIONAIRE, NOT OF A STAESMEN. RAYMOND EDDE HOWEVER ENJOYS A REAL PERSONAL POLITCIAL FOLLOWING.

5. DAHER IS CONFIDENT THAT GROUP OF INDEPENDENT DEPUTIES, INCLUDING HIMSELF, CAN PUT FORTH RPOGRAM BEHIND WHICH MODERATE CHRISTIANS, MODERATE MOSLESM, AND EVEN PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP, CAN UNITE. CHRISTIAN-MOSLEM CONFLICT CAN BE RESOLVED BY ROGRAM OF CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL REFORM. QUESTION IS NOT ONE OF ADJUSTING CONFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS, BUT OF ARRANGING THE AFFAIRS OF STATE WITH VIEW TO BEST INTERESTS OF ALL LEBANESE.

6. LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT -- OR SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT -- IS WAR WITHOUT A CAUSE. PALESTINIANS DID NOT WANT IT, BUT WERE COMPELLED TO REACT TO MARONITE PRESSURE. DAHER SAID HE IS IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH PLO LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING SALAH KHALAF ("ABOU AYAD"), FATAH DEPUTY, AND HE IS CONVINCED PALESTINIANS PREPARED TO LIVE WITHIN TERMS OF STATUS QUO ANTE -- ESSENTIALLY CAIRO ACCORDS OF 1969.

7. SYRIAN INTERVENTION HAS BEEN DISMAL FAILURE: IN ADDITION TO INEPTNESS AND HEAVY-HANDED WAY, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT SYRIANS WERE IN LEBANON TO SUPPORT CHRISTIANS, NOT TO NKNOCK CHRISTIAN, MOSLEM AND PALESTINIAN HEADS TOGETHER. THIS PROBABLY GOES BACK TO FRANJIEH'S PERSONAL, FAMILY, COMMERCIAL AND INTELLIGENCE CONNECTIONS IN DAMASCUS.

8. DAHER SAID THERE WAS CHANCE FOR POLITICAL SOLUTION WHEN SARKIS WAS ELECTED, BUT LARGE-SCALE SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN EARLY JUNE SCUTTLED IT. NOW, AFTER BATTLE OF TELL ZAATAR, THERE MAY BE ANOTHER CHANCE, PROVIDED THAT SYRIANS WITHDRAW -- IF NOT ENTIRELY, AT LEAST TO POSITIONS THEY HELD CLOSE TO THEIR OWN BORDERS TWO MONTHS AGO. T CAPTURE MOMENT, DAHER SAID RAYMOND EDDE, HE AND OTHER DEPUTIES -- CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM --PLAN TO LAUNCH NEW MOVEMENT, PERHAPS TO BE CALLED "NATIONAL UNION," IN NEXT FEW DAYS. (IN FACT, BEIRUT PRESS CONFIDENTIAL

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JULY 2 SPEAKS OF A "NATIONAL FRONT.")

9. DAHER SAID THERE WRE AS MANY CHRISTIANS LIVING IN PREDOMINANTLY MOSLEM AREAS OF LEBANON AS IN MARONITE HEARTLAND OF MT. LEBANON. PARTITION IS THEREFORE ABSURD. CHAMOUNIST ATTACK ON TELL ZAATAR IS ABSURD. IF MARONITE FANATICS COME TO ESPOUSE PARTITION, CHARITIANS ELSEWHERE WILL RISE UP AGAINST THEM HE SAID GREAT MASSSO OF SOME 600

FORMER CHRISTIAN ARMY OFFICERS ARE FROM OUTSIDE MARONITE HEARTLAND, ARE NOT SUPPORTING SECTARIAN MARONITE CAUSE, AND WILL RISE UP TO ORGANIZE THEIR OWN MILITIA TO FIGHT IDEA OF PARTITION. (OTHER OBSERVERS DO NOT SHARE THIS VIEW.)

10. DAHER HAS LIVELY CRITICISM OF US AND TENDS TO ACCEPT US-ISRAEL-SYRIA CONSPIRACY THEORY. HE ALLUDED TO NOTION OF KNOWLEDGE AND MANIPULATIVE SKILL OF US GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY ITS FAMOUS CIA. SURELY US WAS BEHIND WAY THIS INTERVENTION SERVED TO EXACERBATE RATHER THAN ALLEVIATE INTRA-LEBANESE AND LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN CONFLICTS.

11. DAHER ASKED WHAT US, AS WORLD'S LEADING LIBERAL DEMOCRACY, WAS GOING TO DO ABOUT LEBANON, THE ONLY LIBERAL DEMOCRACY IN MIDDLE EAST. WHAT SOLUTION HAD THE US SEEN FOR LEBANON? EMBOFF REPLIED THAT US WAS NOT LIKELY TO FIND SOLUTION AS LEBANESE THEMSELVES. THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION SHOWED HOW FOREIGN INTERFERENCE COULD GO EASILY AWRY. HE SAID SPECIAL EMISSARY SEELYE HAD NOT COME TO LEBANON IN EXPECTATION OF AS HIGH A PROFILE AS EMISSARY BROWN. RATHER, FOR NOW, HE HAS FOCUSED ON ESTABLISHING CONTACT WITH AS MANY LEBANESE LEADERS AS POSSIBLE AND ASSESSING SITUATION.
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